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JPNS 412.01: Introduction to Classical Japanese

Judith N. Rabinovitch

University of Montana - Missoula, judith.rabinovitch@umontana.edu

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Japanese 412: Introduction to Classical Japanese

Prof. Judith Rabinovitch, X5101 LA 320 jnrabino@selway.umn.edu

This course is a nuts and bolts introduction to classical Japanese language, its grammar and sentence structure in particular, designed to captivate you with the inimitable pleasures of classical Japanese. We will be sampling various poetic and prose materials in the literary realm, these excerpted in small pieces and selected to foster your ability to read and appreciate premodern Japanese literary writings. Most works read this term will be pieces from the 8th to the 14th century, the Court Period, which includes the Nara period (704-794), the Heian period (794-1185), and the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Some later Edo period (1603-1868) works may also be introduced, if time permits. This course will be largely conducted in English, as discussions will be, first and foremost, linguistic in nature. Japanese will also be used, where appropriate, to render classical prose into Japanese and to make comparisons with modern sentence structure and word meaning.

There will be some exercises and translations assigned, but the main work of the course will be to read and analyze thoroughly the assigned passages, word by word, line by line, using the techniques and knowledge gained in class. Please come well prepared each time to work through the assigned text; all words should have been looked up in advance and a tentative analysis of the passage made, however far off the mark it might turn out to be (no matter).

The art of making brave, educated guestimations (where *certain* interpretation may allude you) is one that needs to be cultivated at this stage, for it helps to develop your imaginative and intuitive powers, both of which are essential for reading a language for which you have no “oral” speech grounding. Therefore, there is no need for panic if you cannot “work something out” decisively or with full confidence on your own prior to class; your best try is all that is required, because all passages will be corrected in class. Your effort to prepare (however tentative your attempts may at times be) will be reflected in my grade assessment of your participation and preparation, as noted below.

It is my observation, after teaching this course many times over a period of 15 years, that students who consistently review the day’s learning rapidly accumulate the basic knowledge required to achieve full success in the course. Daily application, rather than occasional bursts of activity, will foster excellent mastery of the subject. Needless to say, one does need to commit important facts and grammatical principles to memory, for without a growing body of known forms and constructions, the ability to read without undue (i.e., constant) dependence upon a dictionary does not develop.

Personal assistance is also offered; you need only ask for it. Encouragement cheerfully given without request; email questions also welcomed. EMAIL: jnrabino@selway.umn.edu. X 5101

Course Texts: (1) Reikai Kogo jiten (classical Japanese dictionary); (2) Bungo Manual by Helen C. McCullough; (3) Bound, xeroxed materials and course readings (sold at my cost, \$15.00)

Grading breakdown: A (88-100) B (78-87) C (68-77) D (58-67) E (oh my, below 58)

*Three 90-minute test evaluations given at roughly 5 weeks into the course (20%), 10 weeks (20%), and 15 weeks (end-of-term test, 25%). Test total: 65%

*Brief pop quizzes (OPEN BOOK, 10%), in which you will be asked simply to give an analysis of a phrase or even a single grammar point, one clarified in the preceding lecture. The purpose of this exercise

is to train and encourage you to correct your work in class as it is explained AND to review the past lecture's material prior to going to class. These quizzes for this reason will not be announced in advance and will become part of our normal class routine.

*Homework/small translation assignments (5%), including end-of-term translation assignment (10%): 15%

*Class participation and demonstrated level of acquired knowledge and preparation: 10%

There will be random, unannounced spot checks of homework/preparation completion; please bring your notes and tentative analyses of each passage assigned on the date it is to be read. Provide guesses (however imaginative but with an explanation of how you arrived at it) when you get stuck, so as to practice the art of intuitive inference. Do not leave blanks in your homework, but freely mark such "uncertain" interpretations with a question mark. Your best effort to solve problems is all that is required.

Absenteeism: Please note: consistent with strict sectional policies on absenteeism, each absence after the first *gratis* one will be reflected in a one-point deduction from the participation percentage of 10%. In addition, five or more 90 min. absences will result in an automatic failing grade for the course, at the discretion of the professor. If there are medical or other major emergencies (documentable and bona fide), please advise the professor immediately and prior to the class to be missed, so that appropriate assistance may be arranged, when appropriate. **Tardiness** has become a growing problem, especially in the past three years. Student's conflicting work schedules have sometimes been a contributing factor. Please note that tardy arrivals are disruptive to the entire class and also cause the latecomer to miss important announcements and review material, which are often given in the first five to ten minutes of class. Therefore, to discourage such tardiness, each late arrival after the second *gratis* one will result in a one point deduction from the participation mark (10%).

General plan for course: We will begin with a survey of the xeroxed materials, including a variety of tools and charts, this to be followed by an introduction to McCullough's handbook. The use of these essential materials will be explained to you, but it may take a few weeks for you to become thoroughly used to them. We will continue during our second meeting to work through this material: you will learn how to conjugate Japanese classical verbs, how to attach special--and very meaningful!--suffixes to them, how in turn to attach further suffixes to the suffixes. You will learn to identify inflectable suffixes and non-inflectable ones, and learn the basic parts of speech in Japanese. We will also begin to talk about the general meaning categories into which these many special suffixes fall. Grammatical exercises will be assigned at the second or third meeting (depending upon our rate of progress, which differs from year to year), and these will be completed prior to our beginning to read the first selected text, *Iroha Uta*, the so-called Japanese alphabet poem.

Assignment for the second session: please familiarize yourself further with the main xerox packet introduced during the first meeting; read the Introduction "A" (pp. 1-7 only) and Introduction "B" (pp. 1-5) which may be found towards the end of the xerox packet in the "Introductory Readings and Grammar Exercises" section. One or more short written exercises will be assigned during the second meeting. At least two weeks will be spent covered introductory grammar points. After this, we will begin to read the following pieces:

List of Works to Be Read (As Time Allows/Order and Number Subject to Adjustment)

Note: At the start, works are not presented in chronological order so as to allow those easier selections (i.e., those with less rambling sentence structure) to be read first.

“Iroha” (A-B-C) poem: the old Japanese alphabet nicely camouflaged as an *imay*_ style poem with a profoundly Buddhist message. This renowned poem, a model for calligraphy practice and a handy syllabic inventory used in the Heian court, will be read first in this course as it also serves a primer of grammar.

A small sample of Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters, 712), the first Japanese work of literature, myth, and history which survives intact. Written in an experimental style of writing which mixes Japanese and Chinese forms and uses a non-defunct syllabic kanji alphabet system, Kojiki also contains more than one hundred poems, which constitute the earliest recorded verse in the Japanese tradition.

A few selections (1-2) from Man'yōshū [The Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, ca. 759], the first ever anthology of Japanese poetry; all recorded in an experimental, now defunct script; and selections from Kokinshū (ca. 905), the first imperially commissioned anthology of verse.

“Harugasumi”: an amusing anecdote about “poetry contests” taken from the Kokon chomonji, a diverse collection of 720-plus interesting stories compiled in 1254, possibly by a courtier named Tachibana no Narisue.

The first page of Taketori monogatari (The Bamboo's Picker's Tale, ca. early 9th century), the first surviving Japanese tale.

An episode from Ise Monogatari (Tale of Ise, ca. 900), the first Heian “poem-tale” (uta monogatari) which contains charming stories interspersed with poems attributed to famous poet-lover Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) and those in his [romantic] entourage.

An episode from the Tosa Nikki (Tosa Diary, 934), the first Japanese-language (as opposed to Chinese-language) literary diary dating from the Heian period (tenth century, to be more exact), documenting in amusing fashion the adventurous, pirate-infested journey of a Heian provincial governor and his wife, as they travel by sea from their provincial post in Tosa (in modern Shikoku) back to their home in Kyoto. Written by Ki no Tsurayuki, a male courtier and poet of high status, who adopts the persona of a female, breaking new narrative literary ground.

An excerpt from court lady Sei Shōnagon's Makura no sōshi (The Pillow Book, ca. 1000), a classic Heian collection considered the earliest known work in the zuihitsu “following the pen” free-prose tradition.

The little tale “Sorane no Chigo” (The Child Who Feigned Sleep), from the collection of tales Uji shōi monogatari, compiled in the early Kamakura Period (ca. 13th century).

“Anyō no Ama no Kosode” (The Short-Sleeved Garment of Anyō the Nun): a great little tale from the Jikkinshū, a morally edifying story collection dating from 1251.

The opening passage from Hōjiki, Kamo no Chōmei's renowned essay on reclusion and worldly impermanence, ca. 1212.